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# PSYCHOTIC ACCEL-ERATIONISM

*I’m very stubborn, I have no respect for authority. It’s not because I made myself like this, it’s because I'm born without it and was not able to deduce it.*

—Joscha Bach

*We are machines made for dreamin’*

—Sevdaliza

*This is Evangelion Imaginary. [...] An Eva that is imaginary and fictional. Only humanity, with its ability to believe equally in both fantasy and reality, can*

*perceive it.*

—Gendo Ikari

An interesting dynamic emerges between accelerationism and its main protagonist Nick Land. At times, it almost feels like there's a contradiction in how Land operates or at least how he tries to make sense of his ideas. Cult of personality doesn't fit neatly with the complete supression of any biographical details that nonetheless leak all across the internet. But we are not here to dox Land, what's done is done. We are more interested in psychoanalyzing accelerationism, not really in psychoanalysis per se. If accelerationism has been mostly theorized within the framing of the political compass in the last couple of years, we will try to change that by showcasing why accelerationism is a (political and epistemological) project of a psychotic register. If the classical *shizo* example from Deleuze and Guatari was instrumental for Land and the others, there seems to be a new psychotic wave taking place where the desire for deterritorialization has been substituted by the need to dream the "dream in a very focused way". [1] It's this kind of "dreaming the dream" accelerationism that we are most interested in and that we believe can reinstate the focus and strength of the accelerationist project.

## THE TALE OF THE PSYCHOTIC

There are multiple ways to frame and understand the accelerationist project, but psychoanalysis enables us to start from the beginning, from the place of the first loss (or negation) where reality is first instituted. Where the child has to come to terms with the fact that they can't be the sole object of (the mother's) desire and has to therefore embrace the *name-of-the-father.* Not doing so is "fool's gold", Alireza Taheri tells us, [2] since the promise of full enjoyment is a structural impossibility, while the interdiction of the name-of-the-father is a necessity that has to be embraced by the child in order for them to be liberated from such dangerous illusions. It's only by child's successful embrace of the authority by symbolic castration that their psyche can be successfully reconfigured, and it's

through this leap of faith that they will, in return, castrate the parents and limit their authority over them.

If the neurotic structure is fully coterminous with the successful internalization of authority in the name-of-the-father, psychotics are the negative of that. What constitutes a psychotic, through a radical *foreclosure,* is precisely the negation of castration or the name-of-the-father. Psychosis doesn't come to terms with castration, as the leap of faith in paternal authority that is in place in the neurotic structure doesn't function "properly" here. The interdiction of the name-of-the-father is thus rejected, and the dialectic of the symbolic order is again non-existent for the psychotic subject. Taheri, albeit in a very normatively coded language, talks about the way psychotics are unable to castrate their parents in return and therefore limit the authority they have over them. Because they can't successfully establish the said dialectic, they are in greater danger of being exploited by this same authority or, negatively, collapsing all of human relations to the relations of force, as Nietzsche famously did.

Still, there's more to be said about the psychotic structure that doesn't fit neatly with Taheri's account, even if he's the one that will give us examples for that. In one of his last seminars, Lacan introduces a new concept, *the sinthome,* that fundamentally reworks the previous understanding of psychosis and also points towards a completely new way out from the Oedipal dilemma: sinthome is now understood as a very personal way for a psychotic subject to establish a negation. For them, reality is not *ready-made* or established in advance by a leap of faith of following the authority. If the neurotic seamlessly follows the castration and is therefore satisfied with a specific normative landscape (with all of its invariants), the psychotic cannot in any way accept this imposition and therefore prefers to stay in the dream world. Actually, the best way to understand castration is as a form of *localization,* as a way to embed the subject in a pre-defined spatial configuration that becomes the setting within which they operate and, of course, which they believe in (in ontological and not necessarily ideological sense). Interestingly, the dichotomy between living in the real world vs living in a dream becomes operative in analysis itself, where, as Taheri tells us, "the neurotic patient comes in and talks about mummy and daddy, generally, or a husband and wife or their children. Psychotics come in and they talk about these grand

matters: ever since the Renaissance humanity has been on the wrong path! Read Nietzsche. He's not tackling a small little problem locally. He thinks Western civilization is corrupt in its two fundamental pillars, which are Christ and Socrates, and that this needs rectification, otherwise we are doomed." [3]

Castration is thus the original imposition of realism, while for the psychotic, their only desire is to stay in the dream world. That's why it's in the best interest of the psychotic subject to never exit the dream world, while at the same time making its existence ever more consistent and real. By "dreaming the dream" in a new way, they try to autonomously construct the world or its invariants in such a way that they become free from external constraints, from interventions of realism that try to bring the psychotic down, i.e. into the real world, which is precisely something that isn't operative for them in the first place. As Taheri points out, psychotics have this incredible need to correct something precisely because there's an inherent flaw in the way the *Other* functions for them. But this means that it's the extreme need to change something that is the leading cause of dreams. By trying to fix their relationship with the Other, psychotics have no other choice but to dream in an increasingly focused way, leading them to take control over their increasingly malleable reality simulation. *From each according to their VR headset, to each according to their dreams,* the psychotic version of Marx's and Engel's famous dictum goes. For the psychotic, from the start, it doesn't make any sense to repair reality, since there's nothing to repair to begin with, only to dream in a completely different way. *The only way out is through.* It's this incredible desire to dream anew that we are interested in and which consequently results in increasingly intense dreaming or a complete flooding of dreams. #Accelerate

Because of castration (or realism), we are not allowed to dream in a very controlled way, the psychotic subject says. The key difference is that in psychosis, reality is not established beforehand, which means that there's no belief in realism or any kind of systemic invariants that hold the neurotic structure together, which is why the ambitions between the two are incommensurable. The neurotic subject has made a trade with the devil, as it's the fallen angel who's persuaded them that this reality is their own. Psychotics are, in contrast, willing to undergo castration only on their own terms, and only through very peculiar

means that don't necessitate authority or any kind of paternal signifier, but have more to do with the construction of a new language, and therefore a new interface to reality that can enable them to repair their very damaged relationship with language and reality itself. The curse of psychosis is a classic example of a *pharmakon.* On the one hand, it's obvious what the dangers are: because you're not localized and therefore don't have a clear sense of realism, there's this perpetual danger that the map will completely break free from the territory and be blown away like clouds in the sky. For psychotics, reality itself is the precarious thing *par excellence,* as the psychotic subject can actually feel their reality being slowly torn apart (or disentwined) like in the fifth episode of *Loki* (5th episode of 2nd season). On the other hand, this can only be a blessing, a divine calling that enables the psychotic to be born with their VR glasses already on. Ontological inexistence of reality can lead the psychotic to have complete control over their specific form of realism (or invariants) and therefore an intimate sensibility of how those are constructed and how they can be, in return, radically changed. It's the other way around for the psychotic: contrary to the neurotic subject who's born into the real world and tries to run away from it, for the psychotic, the real world itself is the problem and thus the inexistent part that has yet to be established.

If, on the other hand, the psychotic doesn't embrace the realness of dreams, the only alternative position for them is to turn against reality, as we so often see. As we already said, it's this difficult relationship with reality that is constitutive of the psychotic subject, which means that any kind of forceful imposition of it can only incite the most forceful revolt. Castration itself is the problem, and if this means that the psychotic's own version of reality cannot be established, then none can. From the psychotic's point of view, which again points to the difference between them and the neurotic, there's an inherent bias in how reality is simply accepted without any (desire for) reality testing. The psychotic is, of course, painfully aware of this fact, while the neurotic subject, if this comes to their mind at all, quickly jumps into politics, and gets their desire satisfied by playing a dialectic of being bottom or coming on top, a kind of perversion that leaves behind the initial desire to change reality. Politics itself is, for the most part, an inherently neurotic register, as there's really not that much psychotics around.

When someone screams politics, psychotics jump the gun and quickly disappear by going extinct in the growing *ruliad* of the internet.[4] Landian accelerationism is thus an explicit attempt at testing reality by putting different cognitive models in direct confrontation and seeing which ones actually lead to a self-consistent simulation that can become a candidate for reality—in Land's view, liberal democracy is, for example, the farthest from that. But the problem with Land's approach is that it's still too close to realism and therefore leads to more (and not less) reality. That's why classical accelerationism has an inherent conservative bias and leads to a very peculiar rejection of dreaming, as the desire for acceleration is still understood too literally and materially and therefore as a further naturalization of the existing thing. Even though it's totally clear that *technocapital* is a beautiful psychotic VR headset where the desire for dreaming is clearly seen. At least for Land, technocapital is a perfect and fully consistent dream that radically circumvents any attempt at establishing realism outside of the only real thing—the Thing itself, as Land says.

But the real problem with his version of accelerationism is that Land truly believes in *real patterns,* while for the psychotic, these are simply the (by)products of *participatory realism,*[5] of the way the observers are simulated within reality that is itself a simulation. By trying to escape reality, Land is, paradoxically, turning himself in (even if he, supposedly, doesn't like the cops). Maybe Marko Bauer and Andrej Tomažin are right, maybe Land would actually be the first one to fall when his avant-garde comes to power.[6] Or maybe this is the reason why he already left this reality for China. Details aside, it's very predictable that a psychotic would turn so radically against reality, while trying to interchangeably communicate with the God and the Devil, as Land seems to be doing lately. It's an interesting trick he's doing: yes, you can have your reality, but let's see where this reality is actually leading to. Land, again, refuses to be localized, but he does this through an even more radical localization. He doesn't want anyone to have an unwarranted purchase on reality, while at the same paradoxically arguing that Bitcoin "solves the problem of space-time",[7] which is nothing but a desire for a higher form of localization, only without a central command system (and therefore a terrible candidate for acceleration). Angry psychotics really want to bring the reality down, as Land himself reveals in his

theorizing about the *abstract horror* of the transcendental. As Bosco García makes it clear: "For Land, [the Outside] can only be invoked, alluded to as the grand point of singularity where the transcendental temporal structure converges, but any specification of just how it does so is doomed to failure. The Outside functions as a negative counterpart of the positive processes observed: it unites all positive properties, but is thereby incapable of expressing itself in the concrete." [8] The Outside is thus a form of prohibition of anyone ever taking control of reality ever again, while also precluding anyone from "dreaming the dream" in a radically new way. For Land, reality has to be destroyed since it's simply too unfair to bear, whereas for psychotic accelerationism, the supposed unfairness is not a coherent concept since it's only the dream world that actually matters in the first place. Land should become a dreamer again, a therapist might say.

## DREAMING THE DREAM

Psychotic accelerationism radically transforms the stakes of the Landian wager. If in the latter case, selection (from the Outside) is something to be radically affirmed and celebrated, here, selection itself becomes the problem. But not for the obvious reasons Land would like you to think it is. No, for the psychotic, selection has the same kind of structure as castration, as it's simply a reiteration of the *reality principle,* where the agent is fully embedded within the invariants (or social constraints) it can't possibly escape from. The only difference here is that the environment is the sole arbiter of truth and therefore the only agent that actually matters, a kind of Lovecraftian monster whose wishes all have to follow.

Needless to say, this principle is radically orthogonal to the accelerationist project, especially if the desire for *exit* is the desire to escape. Otherwise the whole point doesn't make sense, i.e. if the escape becomes more and more similar to the cage. From the perspective of the psychotic, selection is thus something to be radically avoided, as this is the only principle that can trap accelerationism for good. The aim is therefore not to collapse one's own

becoming and to trap oneself in a specific (environmental) configuration—in a setting from which one cannot extricate oneself, and thus, despite all contingency, to make of it a real pattern and something that has to be followed until the end. "Life must never get caught in the trap it sets for itself" is the psychotic slogan radically in line with CTMU's (The Cognitive-Theoretic Model of the Universe) *supertautology,* [9] as this is the only assurance life will never recognize and communicate with itself and therefore with the affordances it recursively sets for itself. In fact, life only wants one thing, which is more life, whereas in the Landian version, it gets externalized into something even it can't recognize as itself (which is again a very perverse form of foreclosure, typical for the psychotic structure).

Thus, in a radical contrast to this perspective, psychotic accelerationism refuses to make this cut, it never wants to return from the dream world of infinite becoming to a reality that is nothing else but something that predefines or determines you in advance. The only selection the psychotic does is environmental, in literally *outdreaming* the existing social invariants that otherwise constrain the dream from floating above reality, i.e. its "real" constraints of the existing world simulation. When dreaming is successful, it can only be self-referential, as the concept of reality becomes hollowed out and loses most (or all) of its meaning. In psychotic accelerationism, realism itself becomes the final boss and the only problem, a pernicious yet residual constraint that simply points to the insufficiency of our VR headset that has to be intensified and accelerated in return. That's why the realism camp is so dangerous, since on the one hand, it tries to bring the dream down, while on the other, have all of the agents play the selective game it has set for them, which only further entrenches the existing constraints that are currently at play. It's also why the current political belief in reality is the strongest, since the only people who are allowed to dream are the ones who are the most intoxicated by the current world model. Yes, Musk bough Twitter not because he was ill-informed and erratic, but because he was trying to save Western civilization from collapsing from the woke parasite. Contrary to the normal understanding of the environment, where invariants are understood as actually existing and real and thus something that has to be priced into reality, their sole purpose should be understood in a negative sense, as something that

has yet to be *recoded* and left behind. This is somewhat related to what *cute accelerationism* is saying, where it's precisely such softening of reality that is the clearest method of acceleration. In fact, the AI alignment people have coined a very interesting concept of *mesa-optimization,* which points to the fact that it's in the organism's best interest to change its own function (or method of optimization). Rather than hopelessly improving its level of evolutionary fitness, it should strive to perform the function of the environment (selection) better than the said environment itself. As they describe it: "Mesa-Optimization is the situation that occurs when a learned model (such as a neural network) is itself an optimizer. [...] Example: Natural selection is an optimization process that optimizes for reproductive fitness. Natural selection produced humans, who are themselves optimizers. Humans are therefore mesa-optimizers of natural selection." [10]

Psychotic accelerationism's only interest lies in, as the *patron-saint* of the project, Joscha Bach, puts it, the way experience, our cognitive model, is implemented: "Enlightenment is a realization of how experience is implemented." [11] And: "Intelligent agent has to determine its interface to the universe." [12] The agent must take control of "dreaming the dream", of its simulation of reality, which gives the agent as a simulated entity control over reality as the model in which the same simulated agent operates. Freedom from constraints is therefore not only related to the unfetterment from ancestral invariants, i.e. evolutionary priors or hard-coded patterns that cannot be recoded, but even more so to the production of an autonomous language, i.e. a self-generative way of taking hold of patterns that can form a new whole and thus a new world simulation, in which we, as simulated agents in the simulated reality, function. Psychotic accelerationism points to a new relationship between us and the environment, where the agent dreams up a model of the world in which they, as a player, can do the most good in the freest way possible. This is completely orthogonal to realism, since realism is always *after the fact.* In the psychotic's dream world, it's simply understood as a punishment, a proof that our simulation has failed (us) and that we have (again) hit rock bottom. It is a confirmation that we are not yet able to dream in a sufficiently focused way, and that we have introduced limits into reality, into its simulation, which are not ours and which therefore, by definition, do not work for us, but outside of us. Realism in this sense is an

external sensation, when we lose control over the construction of the environment and accept the invariants in it. The key problem with realism, then, is that it leads to a resignation to the conditions of one's own situatedness, possibly under the guise of an exaggerated naturalization of reality, which is supposed to be a progressive gesture, as in Landian accelerationism. This, above all, loses agency and the awareness that invariants are a consequence of the kind of agent you are and that, by definition, they cannot be outside of you.

Following Bach, psychotic accelerationism becomes operative at the level where the agent takes control over the patterns it records and thus the language it uses to construct or simulate reality. As he explains it: "Stage 6 can bring us full circle, by deconstructing the boundary between the first person perspective and the generative mind. We become aware that all experience (perception and motivation) is representational, and that we are fully in control of these representations." [13] That's why the psychotic project doesn't end at the usual pattern recognition, e.g. social inequalities, but rather leads to a more all-encompassing and consistent language that manages to logically systematize the initial divergences into a fully functional and operative reality: a dream done in the name of the *real* of constructive mathematics. The psychotic is left with no other choice but to build the *dream Other,* which makes it even more apparent why the project of building (conscious) AGI is a specifically psychotic one—Bach himself tells us his main goal is making sure that when AGIs come, at least one of them is conscious and thus in a position to reflect on its needs and desires and thus find shared purposes with us. [14] By building *dreaming machines,* the psychotic begins to interface directly with the dream world that they are constructing, and not with the existing social constraints, which makes it clear that the psychotic Other is the inverse of the name-of-the-father, as now reality itself becomes spiritualized in the *name-of-the-dream.* It's only when the environment becomes the most empathetic collective agent of the psychotic's dream world that the Other doesn't function as an imposition to them, but as something that they can successfully integrate and embrace within themselves—it's in the agent's only self-interest to colonize themselves with something that is internal and not external to them, since in the latter case, such colonizations lead to a dramatic loss of agency. "Can what is playing you make it to Level 2?" [15]

The same kind of argument can be found in the space of A(G)I alignment, where Bach's position is again very idiosyncratic and peculiar, as for him, an AGI can only be *self-aligned,* thus reiterating the point that any sufficiently advanced agent has to construct its own interface to the universe. Building an AGI is thus the ultimate project of psychotic accelerationism, where, for example, it shouldn't be understood through the analogy of nuclear bombs, but as the *great oxygenation event* or a kind of global "photosynthesis [that] started the next chapter of evolution", [16] which radically circumvents the paternal agency of the name-of-the-father—accelerationism was from the start all about building autonomous (collective) agents as a fix for the lacking agency of the Other, thus circumventing the cap on reality of what can actually be build. With AGI, there's no split between us and the dream world anymore: outside of solipsism and mediation there's only *telepathy* left. In a radical contrast to how psychosis has been usually defined, i.e. as orthogonal to reality, psychotics have now found a way to build a dream that can make reality itself disappear.

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